

O'Brien's Baedeker for 1917 Short Stories

THERE is at present in America a healthy and growing interest in the short story as a literary form. This has been fostered by critical discussion, in which Edward J. O'Brien has taken a leading part.

The development of interest in the short story is an excellent thing. Mr. O'Brien, with his extensive reading and his conscientious annual report, is doing a useful work in developing that interest.

It would be still better for the future of the short story among us if more critics gave themselves to an earnest study of fiction—if editors, authors and critics exchanged views more freely.

As it is, a ridiculous importance is given to the preferences of one man. Mr. O'Brien's book claims too much with its title, *The Best Short Stories of 1917*, for one critic cannot set up an Academy by himself.

O'Brien Doing Better.

Mr. O'Brien's critical judgment appears to be improving. His volume for 1917, compared with those of 1915 and 1916, shows selections more reasonable than in the earlier years, when his praise was frequently ill dispensed. But even now it is necessary to take issue with him on various points.

O'Brien persistently confuses the short story with other forms of fiction, for he includes in his list of honor novelettes as well as brief sketches possessing none of the structural form of the short story. O'Brien says: "The academic limitations of the short story have never interested me greatly." You wonder why. Of what use to play the game out of bounds? *Dare's Gift*, by Ellen Glasgow, which he lists as one of the best—sixty-three, is it? It's hard to keep track of all these different ratings!—appeared as a serial in several instalments and has no visible claim to be called a short story.

The Strange-looking Man, by Fanny Kemble Johnson, which he lists as one of the best twenty stories, while admirable in its art is merely a light sketch.

Sketches and Stories.

The sketch is a worthy form of literature, and it would be well if our publications gave more encouragement to these impressionistic and sometimes extremely effective trifles. But they are not short stories and should not be so labelled. A short story requires more than one line of interest, for the threads of narrative must cross each other, causing an entanglement. There must be a complication and a solution, a struggle and a denouement in a short story. A certain structural form, a plot interest—sometimes slightly stressed, as in character stories, but always present—is required.

Not only with respect to form but in the matter of substance as well, the reader will often disagree with Mr. O'Brien's verdicts. He appears to favor the bizarre character study rather than the story of action or plot. For instance, you ask yourself helplessly why he considers Edwina Stanton Babcock's *The Excursion* one of the best five stories of the year. His reasons as set forth are unconvincing.

Mistakes of Emphasis.

The editor of the short story year book leans to the folk story, which is good fiction of course—when it is good—but which can be overvalued. Stories of more sophisticated life have their place, and their art is as finished as that of the folk story, and frequently more so. Mr. O'Brien is obsessed with the immigrant story.

His methods of comparison are so seriously statistical as sometimes to become absurd. Art cannot be measured as mathematically as he would measure it; and authors and editors who do not grow restive under his more meaningless comparisons must be machines.

Still *The Best Short Stories of 1917* contains certain aids to writers, in the form of lists of magazines, biographical notes of authors, and so forth. These may make it worth having around.

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1917 AND THE YEAR BOOK OF THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY. EDITED BY EDWARD J. O'BRIEN. Small, Maynard & Co. \$1.50.

The Nation says: "The greatest of the books that voice the new soul of France."

UNDER FIRE

By Henri Barbusse (Le Feu)

\$1.50 Net. Postage Extra. All Bookstores. E. P. DUTTON & CO., 681 5th Ave., N. Y.

Gunner Depew's Great Story



THERE'S a point somewhere in *Gunner Depew* where you stop and wonder if Depew knows how good a book he has written. Probably not, for this American youth of 23 is not a stylist, and his volume has a literary art precisely because it strives for none. It comes straight from the rich and varied experience of a young fellow who has lived through extraordinary adventures and tells them in unaffected directness.

With the Foreign Legion.

Gunner Depew was "there" on many thrilling occasions. He volunteered for service in the Foreign Legion in France, receiving his commission as gunner on January 1, 1915. He tells us of his rollicking adventures on sea and on land, of his pranks with the "garbey," his fights with the police in different ports. He recounts his life on the firing line, his experiences as a sniper, his work on "listening post," on "runner service," his struggles with the pests of the trenches and his nausea over jam in tins.

We are with him through the bombardment at Dixmude, we go over the top with him and we see him in the hospital, where he is laid up with a wounded thigh. One incident of his experience there is significant. He tells of a German doctor who had been picked up dangerously wounded, and had been tended by a young nurse in the hospital, who kept him alive through sheer force of will when the doctors gave him up. When he was convalescing, the nurse was to be transferred to another hospital and came

in to tell the patients good-by. Finally she came to this German doctor.

"They talked for a little while, and then she put out her hands as if she was going to leave. He put out his hands, too, and took hold of hers. And then he twisted her wrists and broke them. We heard the snap."

"There were men in that ward who had not been on foot since the day they came to the hospital, and one of them was supposed to be dying, but it is an absolute fact that when we heard her scream there was not a man left in bed."

"I need not tell you what we did to the German. They did not need to shoot him, after we got through with him. They did shoot him, to make sure, though."

Captured by the Moewe.

Gunner Depew was in the fighting at Gallipoli, and he fought the Turks at the Dardanelles, after which engagement he went in search of his pal, Murray, who was missing, to find him crucified against a door, with his hand cut off.

Gunner Depew won the Croix de Guerre, was captured by the Moewe and taken to Germany with the crew of the Yarrowdale and suffered the horrors of a German prison camp for three months. He was finally released through the efforts of Ambassador Gerard, and came back to America, in bad condition because of malnutrition and neglected wounds, but still with the unconquerable buoyancy of spirit that kept him alive through unspeakable holes of hell.

GUNNER DEPEW. BY HIMSELF. Reilly & Britton. \$1.50.

Some new Appleton Books on the War, and three of the season's leading Novels.

OUT THERE

By CHARLES W. WHITEHAIR

This famous Y. M. C. A. man has seen it all. He has been with the boys going in and coming out. He handled the wounded—he knows how they a ted, lived and died on every part of the great front—even in the Poly Land. He tells it all in his thrilling new book—more than he has ever told in his famous lectures. Whitehair is the big name today in the United States. Read his book and see the war as no other man has been able to show it to you. Illustrated. \$1.50 net.

To Bagdad With the British

By ARTHUR T. CLARK

Arthur Clark, who was with the first division of Britishers who landed at Fao, tells the thrilling story of the eventful campaign which culminated in the fall of Bagdad. His book is packed with instances of the great courage and good humor of Tommy Atkins, and his account of the war in this mysterious land reads like "The Arabian Nights". Illustrated, \$1.50 net.

American Women and the World War

By IDA CLYDE CLARKE

The thousand and one questions which patriotic women are asking are answered by Mrs. Clarke in this informative book. It is a complete record of all that American women are doing and can do to help win the war. \$2.00 net.

THE BAG OF SAFFRON

By BETTINA VON HUTTEN

How a selfish woman learned the true requisites of happiness. "An interesting picture of life by one who has an eye to see the romance and beauty in things around her and the skill to depict these entertainingly and with artistry."—Philadelphia Ledger. Picture: in full color. \$1.50 net.

THE LUCKY SEVEN

By JOHN TAINTOR FOOTE

Seven admirable stories covering a wide range of life and characters. "Any writer who can use such simple material with such effectiveness as Mr. Foote is a master indeed of the very special art of short story writing."—New York Sun. Illus. \$1.40 net.

EXTRICATING OBADIAH

By JOSEPH C. LINCOLN

One of the three best selling novels in America since last fall. A refreshing romance of Cape Cod, "as true to life as life itself". Illustrated. \$1.50 net.

For Sale at all Booksellers

THESE ARE APPLETON BOOKS
D. Appleton & Co., Publishers, New York

By JOHN GALSWORTHY Five Tales

In these stories Mr. Galsworthy returns to the type of character which he so masterfully depicted in those great stories of English social life—"The Man of Property," "The Country House," etc. The reader familiar with those earlier works will welcome an old acquaintance in "Indian Summer of a Forsyte"—a name which stands for the conservative, intensely respectable, prosperous, and socially established man.

It will be seen that each story is built around a single dominant character. They are stories which it is not easy to lay down.

\$1.50 net

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S
SONS



FIFTH AVENUE,
NEW YORK

SONGS OF A MOTHER

By Marietta M. Andrews

Songs of home, of the simple life, of the tenderest and strongest earthly tie, that which binds mother and child in its embrace. A book that will speak to the heart.—Detroit Free Press.

\$1.00 Net. Postage Extra. All Bookstores. E. P. DUTTON & CO., 681 Fifth Ave., N. Y.